

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Leaders in Vientiane, Laos**

September 8, 2016

I want to begin by thanking the Government and the people of Laos for hosting this summit. I've now met with the leaders of ASEAN eight times, visited Southeast Asia more than any other U.S. President, and it reflects the growing importance of ASEAN and this region.

ASEAN is key to the U.S. rebalance to Asia, and more importantly, it's key to a peaceful and prosperous future for the world. And we have forged a strategic partnership. The U.S. is committed to building on this solid foundation.

We have laid out a common vision for the region, articulated in the Sunnylands Declaration: An open, dynamic, economically competitive Asia-Pacific that respects human rights and upholds a rule-based order. Today we can discuss further how we can advance that vision together.

Through the U.S.-ASEAN Connect initiative, we're deepening our economic cooperation. As ASEAN integration generates new opportunities, the United States will work to promote innovation and entrepreneurship between our countries and throughout the region, and we will continue to push for completion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

With respect to maritime issues, we'll continue to work to ensure that disputes are resolved peacefully, including in the South China Sea. The landmark arbitration ruling in July, which is binding, helped to clarify maritime rights in the region. I recognize this raises tensions, but I also look forward to discussing how we can constructively move forward together to lower tensions and promote diplomacy and regional stability.

ASEAN played an important role in achieving the historic Paris climate agreement, an agreement that we must all work to bring into force as soon as possible. With ASEAN nations particularly vulnerable to climate change, we have to work together to transition to cleaner economies so as to make sure that it is not impinging on development, but rather a spur to development and opportunity for your people. And we have to strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change.

And together, we're expanding our cooperation to address transnational threats. We will stay vigilant in combating terrorism, including in Southeast Asia, where we have very strong partnerships with many of you. We'll continue to partner to strengthen global health security and fight epidemics. We will continue to make progress on people-to-people ties, scientific exchanges, and making sure that we are increasing continually the opportunities for our businesses, our students, our scientists, our people to work together.

So again, I want to thank very much, Mr. Prime Minister, you and the Government and the people of Laos, for your excellent hospitality. And I very much look forward to our work here together.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in Room 3 of the National Convention Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith of Laos.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders.

Locations: Vientiane, Laos.

Names: Thongloun Sisoulith.

Subjects: Asia : Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Asia : Economic growth and development; Asia : Educational exchanges with U.S.; Asia : Human rights issues; Asia : Research and technology, cooperation with U.S.; Asia : South China Sea, maritime territorial disputes; Asian : Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Environment : Climate change; Environment : Paris Agreement; Foreign policy, U.S : Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA); Laos : President's visit; Laos : Prime Minister; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

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